

Lesson 100
Rev. B. Kurtz

PASTORAL ADDRESS,

OF THE

REV. MR. B. KURTZ,

NOW ON A TOUR THROUGH EUROPE AS AGENT FOR THE

THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

OF THE

GENERAL SYNOD OF THE LUTHERAN CHURCH ;

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A1P135 **PASTORAL LETTER**

MY DEAR BRETHREN :—

THOUGH separated from you in body, I am often with you in spirit, and feel that attachment to you, and that deep interest in your welfare which eleven years residence among you, as your pastor and spiritual teacher, could not fail to produce. Frequently in my travels I think of you, and remember with gratitude the numerous evidences of love and affection which I received at your hands, and the many religious exercises which I enjoyed in common with you; and in this recollection I am irresistibly drawn to a throne of grace, where I pour out my heart in fervent thanksgivings for God's mercies and in earnest supplications for your temporal and eternal welfare.

Whilst wandering in strange lands thousands of miles from my beloved home and from the dear people of my charge, I have abundant cause to thank the Lord that I every where meet with a brotherly reception and christian treatment, and often have opportunities, to ascend the walls of Zion and proclaim the everlasting gospel of the Son of God to thousands of hearers, and as I humbly trust, and indeed have good cause to believe, not without some benefit to their immortal souls. Frequently when contemplating the goodness of our heavenly Father, and the many proofs of his protecting and directing providence which I have so signally experienced in my journey, I am compelled to proclaim : *Lord! what is man that thou art mindful of him, and what am I that thou shouldst prepare my way wherever I go, and open to me the hearts and houses of the people?* — Truly it is the Lord's doing, and to him let all the honor and glory be ascribed through Jesus Christ our only Saviour and Redeemer.

Think not however, my brethren, that the kindness of strangers can alienate my affections from my former friends; no, my heart still beats in love to you, and my soul's ardent desire is to see you again and preach the word of eternal life in your midst, and aid you so far as God may grant me grace, in preparing for that life, where all the pilgrims of the Lord will meet to part no more, and where all will unite in shouting the triumphs of redeeming love. Yes, I feel an increasing desire towards you, and this has induced me to send you this proof of my affectionate remembrance.

As it is now upwards of a year since I had the pleasure of seeing and addressing you, and as 6 or 7 months will probably yet elapse before this pleasure will again fall to my lot, and as amidst the dangers and vicissitudes of this life it is ever possible that this joy may entirely be denied me, and these lines may therefore prove a farewell address, I feel very anxious to say something that may prove an everlasting benefit to your immortal souls.—The amount of all I have to say is this:—*Seek to be found in the Lord Jesus Christ, not having your own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith**.

I have now travelled through the greater part of Europe, and become acquainted and conversed with the most distinguished theologians—theologians who are at once the pride and boast of this hemisphere, and the advocates of systems of faith at open variance with one another,—some as honest in their views as they are learned, having marshalled themselves in the ranks of heterodoxy, or *rationalism* as it is here termed (unitarianism), and others not less profound and certainly more pious, who boldly and mightily contend for the faith once delivered to the saints. I have listened coolly and calmly to the arguments which are adduced in support of their opposing Creeds, and heard them in their public performances in the pulpit, nor have I been inattentive to the effects of their different systems as exhibited in their lives and in the moral deportment of their followers, and I can

* Phil. 3, 9.

testify, I hope with a clear conscience that the result of all I have witnessed, since I have been separated from you, is an increased and confirmed conviction, that "there is salvation in none other, than Christ, neither is there any other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved,"* and that it is therefore our highest wisdom, and first and most important duty to comply with the words of the pious Apostle, and strive above all things to be found in Christ, not having our own *righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith.*

This is a lesson which I often proclaimed and inculcated when I had the pleasure to address you from the sacred desk, and now that an extensive experience of 15 months in foreign climes and in the most brilliant circles of transatlantic erudition, has only tended to corroborate my former religious views, I feel more than ever disposed to impress this lesson deeply and indelibly upon your minds.

Our own righteousness which is of the law, or which proceeds from our obedience to the moral law of God, is infinitely defective. The law demands perfect and universal obedience, which the most irreproachable amongst us have not yielded; the law requires perfect and undivided love to God and our neighbour, which the most devoted have not exercised; nay, our very best works, if weighed in the balance, would be found wanting both in their motive and in their execution, so that they form a subject for repentance as well as our violations of the divine commands; and hence it is justly said, † that our best righteousness are as filthy rags.

But even admitting that our obedience were perfect, still we would be destitute of merit, inasmuch as it is our duty to render complete and unreserved obedience; and therefore the Saviour declares: "when ye shall have done all things which are commanded you, say, we are unprofitable servants; we have done that which was our duty to do.† Hence the im-

* Acts 4, 12.

† Luke 17, 10.

† Isa. 64, 6.

portance of renouncing all dependance upon ourselves or our own righteousness, and of concentrating our hopes in Christ, the only true and safe foundation. Hence the absolute necessity of flying as humble penitents weary and heavy-laden to the only Mediator between God and man, of entering into communion with him, of becoming united to him as living branches are connected with the vine, and of placing our whole and entire trust in that righteousness which is of God by faith.

The Father of mercies knowing how deeply we were fallen, and how utterly incapable we are of establishing a righteousness of our own, which could endure his scrutiny, in the plenitude of his grace laid help upon one who is able to save to the uttermost all who come to him. He sent his only begotten and well beloved son into the world to assume our guilt and fulfill in our stead the whole law, that thereby he might work out a righteousness full and free, perfect and immaculate, which would bear the test, and justify us before the righteous judge of the world.

This is called the *righteousness which is of, or from God*, because Christ who effected it is God, and because it is the gift of his grace and mercy. It is also termed a *righteousness by faith*, i. e. a righteousness which is not procured by our merit, but cometh by faith, or is imputed to us when we embrace Christ in faith and are found in him, placing our whole trust in his propitiatory sacrifice. It was in this view of the subject that the Apostle observed that God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them ;*—For he hath made him to be sin (a sin offering) or us, who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.†

Permit me then to repeat and enforce the exhortation :— Seek, as you value your spiritual interests, your eternal welfare, the salvation of your immortal souls—seek—I conjure you by the living God ! to be found in the Lord Jesus Christ, closely and inseparably united to him by an active and saving faith, casting away all confidence in your own works,

* 2 Cor. 5, 19.

† 2 Cor. 5, 21.

and resting all your hopes upon the everlasting righteousness of Jesus Jehovah; always manifesting the sincerity of your faith by a holy walk, by a life entirely devoted to the service of him, who *gave himself for us, that he might purify unto himself a peculiar people zealous of good works.** Then, and not till then, will you be put in the possession of those present comforts and future prospects, which it is the privilege of the children of God to enjoy.

Whilst journeying in distant countries, far from the enjoyments of my home and the society of my friends, subjected to the fatigues and discomforts which I must necessarily experience; it is often a source of unspeakable pleasure to reflect, that there are some among you to whom my ministerial efforts, feeble as as they were, have not been in vain, who having already obeyed the aforementioned admonition, have often tasted that God is good, that Christ is gracious, that to know him is life eternal, and to love him is to be happy. Truly the Lord is your Shepherd, and you shall not want. He maketh you to lie down in green pastures, he leadeth you beside the still waters.† He restoreth your soul: he leadeth you in the path of righteousness for his name's sake.

In a short time I hope to see you face to face, if not in this world, yet in that which is to come, in the house not made with hands eternal in the heavens, whose maker and builder is God. There we shall meet as kindred Spirits, as brethren of one heart and one mind, as trophies of Calvaries victory, and chaunt forever the delightful anthem of redeeming love.

To such I say: Stand firmly in the liberty wherewith Christ has made you free. ‡ Watch ye, stand fast in the faith, quit you like men, be strong through him who giveth power to the faint, and increaseth strength to them that have no might.§ Let no man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ.** Having overcome the world, take heed that you are not again led into bondage—having

* Tit. 2, 14.

† 1 Cor. 16, 13.

** Coll. 2, 8.

‡ Ps. 23, 1—3.

§ Isa. 40, 29.

learned from happy experience that Christ is a Saviour and a great Saviour, cling to him whilst life and breath endure ; live daily by faith in him, receiving from his fulness grace for grace to help you in every time of need, and continually *press forward toward the mark of the prize of your high calling in Christ Jesus. Remember that the Christians life is a life of warfare, and that it is your duty to contend manfully under the banners of him to whom you have vowed allegiance; march forwards in his strength, in reliance on his grace conquering and to conquer, subduing every obstacle that would impede your progress, growing in knowledge and in grace, perfecting holiness in the fear of the Lord, and laying up treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal.†

Those among you who are not thus progressing, are certainly going a retrograde course, inasmuch as it is impossible to remain stationary in the work of God ; and will soon feel the consequences in the “withered comforts of their souls and the blighted usefulness of their lives.” O brethren, who have put your hands to the plough, I beseech you, look not back! Having deserted Sodoms borders, tarry not in all the plain. Injure not the glorious cause you have espoused, offend not the God who gave you his son, crucify not the Saviour who bought you with his blood, bring not tenfold destruction upon yourselves, by ceasing to obey the truth, and turning again to the beggarly elements of the world. “Whose hands should build the house of the Lord but yours? Who should make sacrifice for the interests of Zion but you?” God has called you to the honourable station of being “shining lights in the world” and “being the salt of the earth ;” — disappoint him not in his expectation— arise! work out your salvation with fear and trembling. Arise, arise! put on the whole armour of God, redeem the time that is lost by increasing diligence and sincerity; and let the world see, that you are in earnest in your religion, and that whatever others may do, your fixed and irrevocable determination is: to serve the Lord, and to serve him to your latest breath—nay, even whilst passing through the valley and shadow of death.

* Phil. 3, 14.

† Matt. 6, 19.

But if the reflection that my ministrations have been useful to some is a source of joy to me, it is no less painful to think that there is also no small number upon whom my feeble strength has been spent for nought, or at least, who have never yet felt on the all-important subject of religion as they ought to feel, and as they *must* feel, if they would escape the condemnation that awaits the world. Content with the outward appearance of religion, having a name to live whilst they are dead, calling Christ, Master, and yet neglecting and refusing to do what he has commanded them, they are hastening towards death and eternity in a state of utter unpreparedness; and soon, alas, very soon, unless they speedily seek deliverance under the wings of redeeming grace, they will experience the awful consequences of living without God and without religion in the world.

How often, oh, how often my friends, have I warned you with a full heart and a loud voice? how often have I besought and entreated you to flee from the wrath to come? and behold it was all in vain!—and shall this my exhortation which I am about to send across the wide ocean that rolls between us also prove ineffectual? Will you not be convinced that the wages of sin is death, that the wicked shall be turned into hell, and all the nations that forget God? will you not be convinced that there is an immense difference between a true christian and a formal one, between a man who simply leads a moral life, and one who is in Christ Jesus, having Christ's righteousness imputed to him by faith? O be assured that "if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature, old things are passed away, and all things are become new," and be no less assured that if you would be numbered among the saints in glory, you *must* become new creatures, and thus be found in Christ, not having your own righteousness which is of the law, but that which is of God by faith. Let me also beseech you to remember, that this is the season to seek that new birth upon which life eternal is founded. Now is the day of grace, now is the accepted time; if you neglect the present opportunity, your doom is sealed, unalterably sealed in the chambers of endless night.—O brethren, do not deceive yourselves, receive not in vain the

grace that is now offered, reject not the salvation that is brought nigh, tread not under foot the Son of God, and count not the blood of the covenant an unholy thing;—if you do, it will be at the peril of your souls, it will so heighten your condemnation, and fix upon your souls so deep a tinge of guilt, that you will in that day in vain cry to the rocks to cover you, and to the hills to hide you from the face of him that sitteth upon the throne.*

FATHERS AND MOTHERS who are in the decline of life, and rapidly hastening to the grave,—how long has your heavenly Father borne you with patience—how many years has he come seeking good fruit—the fruit of repentance and faith—has he found it? do your consciences testify that you have been engaged in the business of your Master, and performed the work given you to do, and that you are now prepared to depart and be with Christ?

O examine yourselves and discover the real state of your souls. Soon, very soon the places that know you now, will know you no more, your course will be run, and your doom determined—Soon your feeble limbs will no longer be able to support you, the vital stream which now circulates but slowly, congealed by the icy hand of death, will entirely cease to flow, and those eyes already grown dim with age, will close forever. Are you prepared for the transition that lies so immediately before you? are you in a state to appear in the awful presence of God, and to render an account of your stewardship? †O try yourselves, examine whether you be in the faith, and let the remaining remnant of your days be consecrated to the work of preparation for a better and an eternal world. If you have hitherto been sleeping, you must sleep no longer. It is now high time to awake and be concerned for your welfare. Watch, for the Son of man will soon come, behold he is even now coming—trim your lamps, gird up your loins, meet him in true repentance, in the exercise of faith, not having your own righteousness which is of the law, but that which is of God by faith. Then will your hoary heads be crowns of

* Luke 23, 30.

† 2 Cor. 13, 5.

glory, and your exit will be beautiful like the sun when seen from the boisterous ocean sinking beneath the western horizon.

PARENTS! a trust is committed to your hands of more value than worlds—Your offspring are flesh of your flesh, and bone of your bone, they possess immortal souls, and are committed to you that you may train them up for heaven. Are you concerned for their perishing bodies? O be infinitely more so for their immortal souls. Are you anxious to accumulate an earthly inheritance for them, O teach and aid them to lay up treasures in heaven. What is a man profited if he gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? Teach them therefore both by your example and your precepts to seek the Lord while he may be found, and to call upon him whilst he is near. Make them acquainted with him whom to know aright is life eternal, form their minds to habits of early piety, teach them to call upon the name of the Lord as soon as they can lisp the name of Jesus,—pray with them and for them—in the morning when you rise, and in the evening when you retire, give them an interest in your supplications. Inspire them with the profoundest regard for the holy scriptures and the sanctuary of Jehovah, preserve them from the pernicious effects of evil company, and let them witness in the whole of your walk and conversation the cleansing and sanctifying influence of true godliness—Then, if they are saved, you will have the happiness to be instrumental in their salvation, and if they perish, it will not be through your neglect, and the blood of their souls will not be required at your hands.

MY YOUNG BRETHREN—I could not forgive myself if I neglected this opportunity to implore your attention for a few moments. Believe me I am not unconcerned for you. Not only are you required to be your parents' joy, but also our congregation's future hope. In a few years your beloved parents will be removed from the stations they now occupy, and be gathered to the graves of their fathers, and you will be called to supply their places. How then can I be indifferent about the character you assume? O be assured you have been much upon my mind, and often, since I left you, have I invo-

ked in your behalf, the throne which has been sprinkled and rendered accessible by the blood of Immanuel. Would you hereafter fill the places of your pious fathers and mothers, and act with honor to yourselves and usefulness to others, that part which now they are acting? Would you have them and me and the church in general, realize those pleasing anticipations which we entertain concerning you? O then give yourselves to the work of religion, and embark without delay in the service of him who loved you and gave himself for you.

Having but recently entered upon your earthly career, and disposed by your youth and want of experience to view this world only in its most favorable light, you doubtless look forward to the enjoyment of no small degree of comfort and happiness. But let me counsel you as one who is not destitute of experience, to beware whither you go for the realization of your expectations. "This world's a dream, an empty show," and there is nothing like solid and lasting comfort to be found in it, but that which springs from an acquaintance and spiritual union with the Saviour. Whither then shall you go but to him who has the words of eternal life? He is the source of all true felicity, and he is entitled to your love and service. He is altogether lovely and the chief among ten thousand. Angels and archangels, cherubim and seraphim love him—the spirits of the just made perfect love him—the pious of all countries, denominations, and languages love him, and if there be an object in heaven or on earth worthy of your most ardent affection and most devoted obedience, it is Christ. To whom then should you rather consecrate your affections, your hearts, your youthful powers, than to him who alone is able to crown you with joy and glory in youth and old age, in death and eternity. Go to him therefore as humble penitents—become his and remain his true disciples, live, suffer and die for him, who lived, suffered and died for you; and you will experience to the joy and salvation of your souls, what it is to love the Lord Jesus Christ, and to be found in him. Your parents will rejoice, the Church will rejoice, your pastor will rejoice, the heavenly host will rejoice, and when

you shall have finished your pilgrimage here below, celestial spirits will delight in escorting you in triumph beyond the stars through the bright portals of the city of the great God.

MEMBERS OF THE CHURCH-COUNCIL:—Forget not the importance and responsibility of your stations. Your brethren have evinced their confidence in you by assigning you conspicuous places in the congregations. They expect, and they have a right to expect you to be vigilant and active in advancing the temporal and spiritual interests of the flock over which you are overseers;—let them not be disappointed in their expectations.

If you yourselves are experimentally ignorant of the changing and renewing influence of the gospel of Christ, you are, alas! but illy qualified for the discharge of your official duties; and in this event, seek first of all, and with all your heart to be found in Christ, exercising that faith towards him which cleanses the heart and overcomes the world.

Look well to yourselves and to your own households, and to the congregation at large; let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.* Be concerned to rectify mistakes between the brethren, to harmonize disputes, to reconcile contending parties, and so to strengthen the bonds of peace and brotherly love. Let the same spirit be in you which was in Christ Jesus; and in that spirit reprove, rebuke, exhort, warn, counsel, and admonish. Let that excellent and truly evangelic discipline which characterises our church, be exercised with prudence and mildness, but with firmness and perseverance.

Let the rising generation engage much of your attention, and see that the children are instructed in religion. Pray for me that I may be preserved in the path of duty, pray daily for the interests of Zion. Minister to the wants of our indigent brethren. Let not the sick chamber want a comforter, the forsaken orphan a father, or the widow a support, and “so will you rank among the excellent of the earth, and shine

* Matth. 5, 16.

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* Matth. 5, 16.

at last as the brightness of the firmament, among the angels of heaven."

IN CONCLUSION, permit me to dwell for a few moments on the subject of my European tour. Through the tender compassion of God our heavenly Father, my life and health have thus far been preserved, and that too amidst numerous exposures & dangers; for which I desire to be very thankful. It has also pleased him in his mercy, to smile upon my feeble efforts in the accomplishment of the work assigned me. I have been welcomed by our brethren of the faith with open arms, and received every mark of regard and affection. Their hearts and their houses have been thrown open to me, whilst the most influential of both sexes have cooperated in serving the good cause, so that I am not only satisfied with the result thus far, but rejoice and feel myself loudly called upon to bless the name of Him who has the hearts of the people in his hands, and knows how to devise ways and means to effect his own purposes. But shall our brethren at so great a distance evince such zeal for our Theological Seminary, and we, in whose midst it is springing up, remain cold and indifferent spectators? Shall they who have so many burdens to bear, cheerfully take a part of this burden upon themselves, and we whose lot has been cast in so favoured a country, hold back? Shall they who can feel no greater interest in this institution than that which they take in the church of Christ at large, *give liberally*, whilst we who are so vitally concerned *contribute sparingly*? Oh! let us not incur this reproach,—let us not prove ourselves the degenerate children of pious forefathers—let us not so far depart from that liberal and benevolent character which our German ancestors always sustained, and which they handed down to us untarnished and unsullied. Remember, the institution whose cause I am endeavouring to plead, is a christian one, founded on the rock CHRIST, and especially necessary for the preservation and extension of our church—the spiritual and eternal interests of our children and children's children to the latest posterity are contemplated by it. Remember, that all you have is merely a trust, which will soon be placed in other hands, but which at present is at your disposal, in order that you may

give it liberally for the cause of Christ. Bear in mind, how many mercies God has bestowed upon us, whilst we are destitute of a single claim on his favour—how much the Son of God has done for us, though we were his enemies, and what an awful responsibility we will load upon ourselves, if we refuse to give when he commands us to give.—Consider, how little we have comparatively done for the cause of Christ Jesus—look at other denominations—look at our sister churches all around us, how active—how liberal are they! Shall we then alone stand idle? Shall we alone retain with penurious grasp that which in a few years more can be of no earthly benefit to us, but which if now properly applied, may prove an eternal blessing to thousands yet unborn?—Look at the people of the world, how they pour out their treasures to erect houses of amusements, and to support destructive vanities—nay, look at the thousands among the heathens, much poorer than you, expending enormous sums to rear temples of idolatry, and support pernicious superstitions; and shall we who bear the dignified appellation of christians, and profess to be inspired by better principles and to be influenced by nobler motives grudge to support an institution established for the honour of Christ?

Brethren, I beseech you to *“beware of a saving that tendeth to poverty,”* I entreat you to lay aside all excuses, and to do something *effectual* for the kingdom of Him who lived that you might not die, and died that you might live forever. I conjure all who lay claim to the name of Lutheran christians, to arise from their lethargy, to put forth all their strength, and to establish permanently the infant institution that promises so much usefulness to our Zion in particular, and to the Redeemer’s cause in general. *“The Lord loveth a cheerful giver, and it is more blessed to give than to receive.”*

Now to the great Shepherd and Bishop of our souls, the eternal Son of God—*“who is God over all blessed for evermore,”* be ascribed honour, praise and glory throughout the endless ages of eternity! And may the peace of God which passeth all understanding, keep your hearts and minds, through Jesus Christ! Amen.

LEIPZIG, Kingdom of Saxony, March 28, 1827.